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Summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 2 May 2018, at 3 p.m.

President: Ms. King (Vice-President) ..... (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

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In the absence of Ms. Chatardova (Czechia), Ms. King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8: Integration segment (*continued*)

Session 4: *Panel discussion on "National strategies for resilience"*

1. **Mr. Allen** (Chief of the United Nations Volunteers Office in New York), moderator, said that resilience was a vital part of the work of United Nations Volunteers programme, which deployed 109 million full-time volunteers worldwide in support of system-wide efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Technology and innovation were fundamental to resilience, as was human behaviour. Ensuring connections to citizens via social relationships was a key factor in many disasters, and a vital component of how citizens connected to States and to one another. Research from the latest State of the World's Volunteerism report had demonstrated that any strategy for resilience must embed the idea of engagement by people, and volunteerism offered one pathway to that end. Volunteer-led structures were close to issues on the ground and could be adjusted as necessary. The panel discussion would shed light on how countries had formulated resilience strategies and policies to mitigate their vulnerabilities; what challenges they encountered in formulating those strategies; and what the Council could do to support countries in leveraging technology and innovation and catalysing further means to implement national resilience strategies.

2. **Mr. Ovink** (Special Envoy for International Water Affairs of the Netherlands), panellist, accompanying his remarks with a digital slide presentation, said that resilience meant something different to each of the four constituent countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. To a small island developing State like Sint Maarten, resilience meant building back better in a post-hurricane context, whereas for the Netherlands itself, a low-lying delta country, resilience meant working with water rather than against it, and building sustainably around it.

3. A proactive approach must be taken to build resilience, instead of a failure to respond or a response only in the aftermath of a disaster. The pillars of such an approach were commitment from all parts of society, cross-cutting efforts, collaboration, consistency and capacity-building. Those five pillars provided the answer to the question of how to build resilience.

4. The devastation wrought by two category five storms in the Caribbean in 2017 made it clear that islands like Sint Maarten must be built back better, not merely rebuilt. The five pillars had provided the context for a way forward that focused on resilience. For example, the Government of Sint Maarten, in collaboration with the World Bank, had set up a one-donor trust fund in the amount of $500 million. It had also decided to collaborate with several stakeholders on the development of a national recovery and resilience plan. Furthermore, to facilitate cross-cutting efforts, the Government had partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Centre of Excellence for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States to organize a multi-stakeholder "hackathon" event, which had yielded 21 innovative project ideas in areas ranging from sustainable tourism to waste management. To ensure consistency, a follow-up meeting had been planned, a website titled "Build Back Better SXM" had been established and a taskforce of local "build back better" champions had been created with the support of an international advisory board. The follow-up efforts monitored progress and provided an opportunity to develop local capacity to apply for funding and focus on implementation.

5. Efforts to foster resilience in Sint Maarten would be in vain, however, without a broader regional approach, given the economic and social interconnectedness of Caribbean islands; hence the need to scale up and replicate those efforts to promote regional resilience. To that end, the high-level pledging conference organized by the Caribbean Community and UNDP attested to the financial and moral commitment of countries to an integrated approach. The follow-up conference to be hosted by Belgium, Antigua and the UNDP Centre of Excellence in Aruba exemplified collaboration across regions to move the resilience agenda forward. The wide range of stakeholders brought together to seek inspiration and generate funding capacity demonstrated the cross-cutting nature inherent to the effort. Ensuring the consistency of international action was one of the main aims of organizing a follow-up conference. The conference itself had contributed to capacity-building by promoting disaster risk management, building partnerships, exchanging lessons learned and shedding light on climate-resilient infrastructures.

6. Measures to promote resilience in the Netherlands, where living and working with water had been a hallmark of life and culture for centuries, included the Delta Programme. The Government of the Netherlands had demonstrated its commitment to resilience by enacting the Delta Law and establishing a dedicated

planning and response fund. The appointment of a Delta Commissioner helped to facilitate cooperation among all stakeholders, including regional water authorities, local and national governments and businesses. The initiative built on the centuries-old culture of living with water. For instance, at the new river bypass near Nijmegen, improved flood protection had created conditions conducive to better recreation and urban development. Adaptive delta management aimed to attain a long-term solution and adjust to future changes throughout the process. The capacity-building element involved working with all partners to develop the necessary technical expertise.

7. His own work as a special envoy, travelling the world to build coalitions for water resilience, underscored the importance of sharing the valuable knowledge and capacity acquired in local experiences. Water-related disasters were nowhere more widespread and costly in terms of human life and social wealth than in South and Southeast Asia. Indeed, 83 per cent of the population affected by rising sea levels lived in Asian cities. In response, the Water as Leverage for Resilient Cities initiative had brought together the local governments of Chennai in India, Khulna in Bangladesh and Semarang in Indonesia, and enjoyed the support of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Global Centre of Excellence on Climate Adaptation and private partners. The pilot cities had made a commitment to make the Asian continent more resilient. Partners had vowed to collaborate with one another and with local communities and international organizations; the result was a cross-cutting approach to resilience that drew upon the technical, financial, social and cultural expertise of teams, organizations and networks. A consistent effort would be required to mitigate the impacts of rising sea levels, urbanization, land degradation and other phenomena. To that end, capacity-building must be undertaken to enable the participating cities to collaborate and help themselves. The Call for Action launched on Earth Day aimed to empower local companies, organizations and individuals to take the initiative to make their own cities resilient.

8. The time had come to seize the opportunities provided by the current crises, heed their urgency and take action. Governments and the United Nations system must endeavour to integrate those five elements into their approaches to building resilience, and collaborate to strengthen existing partnerships and invent new ones. The current approach lacked scale, impact and the necessary capacity to make progress. The Council's integration segment had a key role to play in linking and strengthening projects across the globe, in the service of future generations and a better planet.

9. **Mr. Ferreira** (Minister of the Environment and Housing of the Bahamas), panellist, said that although the Bahamas, as a country in the north Atlantic, was not typically associated with climate change, its topography and height above sea level left it vulnerable to devastating and increasingly common superstorms, as the world had witnessed the previous year. Despite the Caribbean's miniscule contribution to greenhouse gases, more intense and frequent hurricanes had become the region's new norm. As a result, the region's small economies were finding it difficult to sustain themselves while bearing the burden of high post-hurricane recovery and repair costs, a burden compounded by social ills that continued to hamper economic and social growth.

10. The Inter-American Development Bank had estimated that the tourism sector — his country's primary economic engine — had sustained $68 million in damage-related losses. Additional losses of $13 million in fisheries and $2.3 million in the social sector had contributed to a dramatic decline in economic growth, from 1.4 percent to 1 percent. Preparations under way for the 2018 Atlantic hurricane season were stark reminders of the devastation the two previous seasons had wrought. Amidst efforts to regain normalcy, the Bahamas continued to face challenges associated with such factors as attaining economic growth and modernization, reducing climate-related vulnerabilities and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

11. His country's strategies to mitigate vulnerabilities accounted for the often-neglected social impact of climate change, in addition to its economic and environmental impact. His Government relied heavily on the services of the National Emergency Management Agency to provide food, shelter and financial assistance to the most vulnerable. However, the 2017 hurricane season had revealed that national resources were insufficient to handle the level of devastation caused.

12. Exacerbated by climate change impacts, unequal access to education, health care, water and sanitation reduced a family's ability to recover from a disaster. National strategies must therefore include initiatives that improved community-specific resilience and increased access to critical resources and infrastructure in preparation for and response to natural disasters. Climate change also threatened food security in the Bahamas, which currently imported almost 90 per cent of its food supply. Moreover, unregulated food costs had led to unhealthy eating habits, which, in turn, had contributed to high rates of chronic non-communicable diseases and obesity.

13. In an effort to both address food security and improve dietary practices, his Government was providing tax-breaks on items featured on a newly approved list of healthy food items. It was also working to enhance local agricultural production, overhaul meteorological systems and provide more training opportunities in order to improve early warning systems. In addition, the Bahamas was taking steps to strengthen partnerships with communities and non-governmental organizations with a view to boosting climate resilience.

14. His country's major challenge in formulating strategies and policies to promote resilience was the lack of coordination and integration across government departments, which had resulted in the development of ineffective, redundant and disconnected strategies and policies. Government departments must communicate and identify shared synergies to strengthen cross-sectoral approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and improving the quality of life of all Bahamians. Owing to the country's archipelagic nature, strategies must be flexible and adaptable to the needs of smaller communities and islands. Ensuring that local governments had access to hurricane supplies and equipment was critical in reducing post-disaster response time and potentially mitigating the impact.

15. Another challenge was the reluctance of the disproportionately large ageing population to accept a technology-driven society; however, his Government was committed to leaving no one behind and making the transition a smooth one.

16. The country's elevated gross domestic product (GDP) and its classification as a rich country made it difficult to obtain funding for disaster relief and climate-centred strategies. The large percentage of persons with high net worth not residing in the Bahamas full-time factored into GDP calculations, driving up GDP and making access to funding that much more difficult. Making matters worse, the Bahamas was not scored on a vulnerability index. It would receive a high score, if that were the case.

17. Strategies would ultimately be fruitless without access to the necessary funding. In a country of some 400,000 people where most of the population resided in the capital city, but some islands had only 300 people, investment in large-scale renewable technologies and resilient infrastructure to protect vulnerable coastal communities came at a high cost. Nevertheless, his Government continued to revise existing strategies to meet the demands of a changing environment.

18. The Bahamas was open to the Council's policy recommendations and welcomed its assistance with integrating technologies, forming partnerships and financing sustainable development throughout the country. The Council's efforts to foster innovative approaches to sustainable development and integrate its three pillars into national resilience initiatives were imperative to the country's very survival.

19. His Government had committed to increasing the renewable energy share of the energy matrix to 30 per cent by 2020, and had revised its energy policies to adapt to a global shift towards renewables. A grant from the United Arab Emirates through the Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund would finance a solar application project at the national stadium that would offset 900 kilowatts of energy derived from traditional fossil fuels. Six electric vehicle charging stations would be provided to facilitate the national transition to a more sustainable transport sector. The Bahamas had also received funding from the Green Climate Fund of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to build capacity to address climate change.

20. In late 2017 the historically significant "Over the Hill" neighbourhood had been declared an economic empowerment zone, which meant that tax incentives and ownership opportunities were provided to the Bahamians living there as economic relief measures. Ragged Island, a small group of islands in the central Bahamas, had been devastated by Hurricane Irma, evacuated and declared uninhabitable. In response, his Government had pledged to make Ragged Island the first fully green island of the Bahamas: 95 per cent of the island's electrical needs would be met through solar energy and a battery storage system. The resulting savings would recover the $2 million cost of putting the system in place.

21. Diversifying the country's small economy was another crucial component of the effort to build climate resilience. To that end, his Government was working to make Grand Bahama, an island in the north, the technology hub of the Bahamas. Measures to increase employment and build capacity and embrace a new economic model aimed to reduce the high cost of green technologies. The annual Grand Bahama technology summit, a platform launched the previous year, was open to local and global technology companies that were interested in a presence in the Bahamas and in working with its Government to reform the country. Given that climate change and natural disasters knew no boundaries, there was a pressing need for the international community to come together to tackle those challenges.

22. **Mr. Chitradon** (Advisor at the Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute in the Ministry of Sciences and

Technology of Thailand), panellist, said that his Government's Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute had used science and technology effectively to develop disaster risk reduction at the community level. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without integrating disaster risk reduction efforts into the 2030 Agenda. His country's best practices had resulted from effectively combining innovations with indigenous knowledge.

23. The disaster risk reduction system in the central part of Thailand had been used to produce a flash flood potential index map. After the flood in Bang Saphan in 2017, the Informatics Institute had worked with the Ministry of the Interior to form a group and establish a command centre in southern Thailand. Divided into three main centres throughout the region, the group had developed a monitoring system and now worked together to produce reports twice a day and maintain contact with local communities, which provided updates and images of ongoing developments. Those updates were then marked on the flash flood potential index map. While the 2017 flood had been worse than the 2011 flood, the recovery period had lasted a mere two weeks, compared to two months for the previous flood, as a result of the improved disaster management made possible by hydroinformatics.

24. The floods had made it clear that efforts to mitigate and effectively manage the impact of disasters would require awareness and precise monitoring and early warning of disaster severity. Furthermore, science and technology could be used to improve post-disaster analysis and to rebuild with a view to preventing future risk, as building back better hinged on a thorough post-disaster analysis. A disaster risk reduction system based on hydroinformatics included a monitoring system with enhanced topography, a climate data system, use of that system to create a flood map index and a focus on improving normal, day-to-day operations, which was more cost-effective than focusing on post-disaster crisis management. Post-disaster analysis allowed for better adaptation and a better development plan.

25. Community water resource management at the local level improved the quality of disaster risk reduction efforts, which would be impoverished by a top-down approach. Facilitating community ownership ensured the sustainability of the overall system, integrating community innovation and making it possible to link the national level platform to the community level. The Informatics Institute made use of scientific and technological expertise and worked with communities by harnessing their valuable indigenous knowledge to address a wide range of issues in post-disaster management. Such issues as flood and drought, typically addressed separately, must be managed holistically, as floods could create drought if not managed properly. Such a bottom-up approach to sustainable development could yield tangible results in terms of food, water and energy security.

26. Integration would rely on continuous development of indigenous knowledge. The Khlong Yan community network in southern Thailand, for example, had made use of knowledge handed down from one generation to another regarding the different kinds of native trees and their impact on the ecosystem. Equipped with that information, community members had collaborated with the Informatics Institute to create water and land use maps. Based on the data supplied by those maps, the community had altered its agricultural and other practices and had succeeded in preventing post-flood droughts since launching the initiative. Using shortwave radio in the aftermath of a crisis had also enabled communities to maintain cost-efficient technology themselves.

27. The Phu Tum Phu Kratae community in northeastern Thailand, a community previously affected by drought, had developed a water use map and a water chart that had equipped the community to improve water management by using a canal to divert water through the village and reuse it, thereby increasing water supply. As a result, water supply during the dry season had increased dramatically.

28. In closing, he stressed the importance of acting to improve normal, day-to-day operation before disaster struck in order to build resilience by reducing disaster risk and thereby minimizing the cost of post-disaster recovery.

29. **Mr. Nour** (Director of the Regional Commissions New York Office), panellist, said that the timing of the Council's integration segment, on the heels of the 2018 Forum on Financing for Development Follow-up, helped highlight the cost of failing to act to mitigate the risks associated with natural disasters and the urgent need to mainstream resilience not only in national strategies, but also in the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A recurring message from the forum and elsewhere was that the current pace and scale of investment were not sufficient to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and that there must be a move from billions to trillions. Between 2018 and 2030, an estimated $415 billion a year — accounting for 7 per cent of investments in infrastructure — might be wiped out by disasters, in addition to the medium- and long-term social and economic impacts on increasingly interconnected economies and societies. The regional dimension must

also be taken into account, as the impact of climate change, natural disasters and other challenges varied from region to region, ranging from water shortages and conflict in the Arab region to extensive loss of life and material damage in the Asia-Pacific region.

30. For the first time, the financing for development framework had incorporated the disaster risk and resilience dimensions, recognizing that better ex-ante disaster risk reduction and resilience building mechanisms were needed to ensure sustained progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Prevention and risk management, rather than disaster management, were also at the core of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, which included a target aimed at increasing the number of States with a national risk management strategy in place. It was clear that risk and resilience must become part of relevant budgeting and financing processes in all countries. Significant steps had already been taken in many countries to establish a systemic approach to resilience and disaster risk reduction by incorporating risk assessments in their investment plans and social protection policies.

31. In support of national efforts in that regard, the Council and the United Nations system should leverage knowledge at the regional level, including the applied tools, methodologies and mechanisms developed by the regional economic commissions. For example, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had developed and disseminated damage and loss assessment and post-disaster assessment methodologies. ECLAC provided strengthened leadership to the whole Caribbean region in the areas of disaster assessment and post-disaster needs analysis by providing technical expertise to disaster-affected and disaster-prone countries. In particular, ECLAC provided technical assistance to the Government of Cuba in terms of evaluating the impacts and vulnerability in its north western coastal area and generating databases, methodologies and tools with various applications for the country. Notable innovative financing solutions promoted by ECLAC included debt-for-climate adaptation swaps for the Caribbean, whose high-debt low growth conundrum was closely linked to climate-related natural disasters.

32. In Asia and the Pacific region, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had pioneered a regional drought mechanism that had been used to develop early warning forecasts for drought in Mongolia, in collaboration with national partners and relevant institutions. The ESCAP Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development had been used to bolster community resilience by providing information forecasting on water, land and crop management, thereby increasing the coping capacity of households. The ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness had also contributed to building resilience in communities through regional and national early warning systems for coastal hazards. The operationalization of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System in 2011 had constituted a milestone.

33. In Africa, the African Climate Policy Centre of the Economic Commission for Africa was deploying a cloud-based high-resolution weather prediction and early warning system to enable African small island developing States to manage weather and climate-related risks. The Economic Commission for Africa and its partners had also established the Africa Climate Resilient Investment Facility, whose objective was to strengthen the capacity of African institutions to plan, design, and implement infrastructure investments resilient to climate variability and change.

34. In the Arab region, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia had developed a conceptual framework to address the water-energy-food security nexus in response to acute regional need. The practical applications of that approach included the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region.

35. All stakeholders had an opportunity to support the design and implementation of policies, actions and tools for resilience. For the Council, doing so would entail incorporating resilience as a cross-cutting dimension in the 2030 Agenda and its means of implementation. States must include resilience and disaster preparedness components in national public investment systems, and develop capacities in disaster management and resilience efforts by means of stronger social policies. Meanwhile, regional action would include continued development and support of regional early warning and information systems, knowledge and data exchange, capacity-building and the use of existing regional platforms to test innovative solutions.

36. **Ms. Hamdouni** (Morocco), stressing the importance of regional cooperation in building resilience, said that her country's regional initiatives in that regard included the establishment in 2016 of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin Commission. With an estimated capital of 3 billion euros, the Fund would be used to develop the economy of the Congo Basin by exploring alternatives to deforestation, improving the irrigation of farmland in the savannah and supporting eco-tourism.

37. **Ms. Amatya** (Observer for the Women Thrive Alliance) said that the Women Thrive Alliance brought together grass-roots women's rights organizations from over 50 countries, empowering them to influence gender justice and resilience agendas at all levels and to ensure that Governments, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders delivered on their promise of achieving gender equality by 2030 in a manner that prioritized grass-roots women's needs and solutions. The organization's 2017 National Sustainable Development Goals Scorecard had shown that grass-roots women's rights groups that included marginalized, vulnerable and indigenous communities were still being left behind, despite efforts by those groups to engage with Governments. She enquired how the Goals and gender equality could be achieved if those with the expertise and experience needed to create national policies and resilience-building programmes that left no one behind were themselves marginalized.

38. **Mr. O'Connor** (Observer for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature) said that he had been encouraged by the extent to which nature-based solutions were becoming part of the repertoire of government and community responses to climate change and strategies for resilience and disaster risk reduction. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature worked with local communities throughout the world to find hybrid solutions that combined nature with the best available modern technologies to address sea level erosion, storm surge and other threats related to climate change. He would welcome opportunities to explore ways for his organization to work with all stakeholders to introduce nature-based solutions to shared challenges. Much more research was needed to document the extent to which those solutions worked in practice and to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness compared to traditional solutions.

39. **Mr. Ovink** (Special Envoy for International Water Affairs of the Netherlands), welcoming the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin Commission, said that funding for sustainability and resilience was a complex issue that required patience and persistence. Building capacity regionally was one of the most complex issues when it came to water management, as water did not care about borders. Collaboration would help mitigate conflict and build peace, prosperity and sustainability. From a funding perspective, a focus should be placed on riverine systems.

40. Inclusive approaches were needed to connect grass-roots and non-governmental organizations with national Government initiatives. Radical inclusivity required participation from all stakeholders, at every stage of the process. That was the most difficult aspect of a resilient approach, because Governments, non-governmental organizations and other entities often followed other approaches that were not always flexible. An adaptive approach, however, was critical for implementing the 2030 Agenda.

41. A renewed focus on nature was conducive to inspiration and best practices as well as resilience in the world's natural systems. Although excellent examples of resilience and innovation could be found in all regions of the world, they, on their own, were not enough; everyone needed to leave their silos and make connections across all sectors.

42. **Mr. Ferreira** (Minister of Environment and Housing of the Bahamas) said that issues related to climate change and climate resilience challenged the way that nations related to one another. The metrics used for disbursing aid needed to be rethought, as aid should be distributed according to vulnerability and not according to GDP. The problem of climate change could not be tackled effectively unless all actors worked together to confront common threats. It was necessary to cooperate not only with allies but also with enemies, both real and imagined.

43. **Mr. Chitradon** (Advisor at the Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute in the Ministry of Science and Technology of Thailand) said that while technology was not a panacea, efforts should be made to ensure that policy decisions were based on appropriate science and technology. A science-based approach was essential for infrastructure development, amendments to standards and guidelines and the development of early-warning systems. Multi-stakeholder national platforms for disaster risk reduction could be an entry-point for better engagement on the part of science and technology stakeholders.

44. **Mr. Nour** (Director of the Regional Commissions New York Office) said that the transnational nature of the challenges of climate-related threats, the economic and social challenges of forced population displacement and the scarcity of natural resources made cooperation imperative. Morocco was to be congratulated on its forward-looking policies on renewable energy. In order to ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable populations, risk and resilience should be incorporated not only in national strategies, but also in fiscal frameworks at the national level.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.